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ABSTRACT

The McNeese State University's pilot program in field-oriented competency-based teacher education in early childhood education is designed for prospective teachers to develop and demonstrate competencies believed to be necessary for effective teaching in the early childhood area (K-3), as well as to develop evaluative criteria relevant to the stated competencies. The program is organized into two blocks. Block A consists of 16 semester hours of educational methods including corrective reading, science, social studies, and student teaching. Community involvement is necessary to allow each student two hours per day in the public schools in addition to his two hours per day in university seminars. Constant evaluation is of prime importance in the project, and revisions are made based on the evaluations of the programmatic system. (Author/JMF)

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Lake Charles, Louisiana

1976 Distinguished Achievement Awards
Entry

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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THE FIELD-ORIENTED COMPETENCY-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM AT McNEESE STATE UNIVERSITY

Section I: Summary of Program

In October of 1973, McNeese State University was funded to structure a pilot program in field-oriented competency-based teacher education in early childhood education. This program is designed for prospective teachers to develop and demonstrate competencies believed to be necessary for effective teaching.

An advisory council of fourteen members consisting of faculty, parents, teachers, administrators, students, and businessmen was created to oversee the project. A nine-months program of intensive study including teacher education programs and competency-based programs followed the establishment of the council. The pilot project, which is not a basic modular structure, was implemented in the Fall of 1974 with twenty-four university students and continues in the Fall of 1975 with thirty students. University students in the program were chosen from among volunteers majoring in early childhood education and their courses of study planned so that they would be prepared to enter the project.

The program is organized into two blocks. Block A consists of sixteen semester hours of educational methods which includes: language arts, kindergarten, mathematics, observation, and reading. Block B consists of sixteen semester hours of educational methods which includes: corrective reading, science, social studies, and student teaching. The university student is involved two hours per day in public schools and two hours per day in the university seminars. Constant evaluation is of prime importance in the project, and revisions are made based upon the evaluations of the programmatic system.

Section II: Comprehensive Explanation and Analysis of the Program

A. Description and Development of the Program

During October of 1973, McNeese State University was one of six state universities in Louisiana to be funded by the State Department of Education to plan a pilot program in field-oriented competency-based teacher education in early childhood education. Competency-based teacher education is a program designed for prospective teachers to develop and demonstrate those competencies believed to be necessary for effective teaching.

An advisory council consisting of fourteen members of faculty, parents, teachers, administrators, students, and businessmen was created to oversee the project. From the philosophies of six elementary schools in Calcasieu Parish, the objectives of children in levels kindergarten through grade three were determined. Taking these objectives of children, a committee determined competencies and objectives that student teachers should attain to be proficient in teaching children. In addition, a nine-months intensive review of teacher education and competency-based teacher education programs was made.

Various trips by council members and university teachers were made throughout the South to study existing competency-based programs. Consultants from various states have advised and evaluated the project, as well as conducted workshops. From Austin, Texas, the Research and Development Center, a branch of the National Institute of Education, serves the program as a consultant. At McNeese, there have been workshops, sponsored by the Research and Development Center, for the School of Education and other interested faculty, public secondary teachers, and cooperating classroom teachers in the elementary schools.

The pilot project in early childhood education was implemented in the Fall of 1974 with twenty-four university students; and, continues in the Fall of 1975 with thirty

students. The early childhood education majors were chosen from among volunteers for the program and their programs planned so that they would be prepared to enter the program.

A junior or senior standing and admission to a teacher education program are required to enter the project. In order to graduate from the program, the student teacher demonstrates that he or she possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to be an effective teacher. The student has to exhibit a high level of performance and the listed competencies. The program is individualized, and it is possible that the entrant may require more than nine months to finish the program. The university students in the project are referred to as teacher associates.

The program is not based on modules, but they are used individually as the need arises. The procedure is individualized where assessment is individual and one-to-one counseling is paramount. The ratio of teaching associates to university personnel is six-to-one, thus, permitting much personal contact with each participant.

The project consists of two blocks. Block A is one semester in length (sixteen semester hours) and is the study of the development of young children in the areas of speaking, handwriting, spelling, creative poetry, dramatics, listening, mathematical concepts, kindergarten organization and administration. A study of developmental skills and sequences in reading is related to child development and curriculum development. Techniques for teaching specific subject areas to young children and the proper use of materials and equipment are presented. The teaching associates are involved in observation and teaching young children.

Block B is one semester in length (sixteen semester hours) and is a continuation of the study of the development of language skills in young children and a study of the characteristics of diagnosis and corrective teaching. There is a continuation of the study

of the methods for teaching various subject areas with the addition of social living, and science concepts, as well as the proper use of materials and equipment. Also, there is a resumption of observation and teaching experience in working with the children in levels kindergarten through grade three.

The five elementary schools in Lake Charles used for the project are Cooley, Dolby, Eastwood, Hamilton, and Henry Heights. The university student spends two hours per day in the public school classroom and two hours per day in the university classroom. Periodic evaluations are made by all persons involved in the program. Revisions are based on the evaluations. Active plans are being made to extend this program to all areas of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, which includes Early Childhood, Elementary Education and Secondary Education.

B. Objectives of the Program

1. To identify teaching competencies needed by education students preparing for a teaching profession in early childhood education.
2. To design a teacher education program for developing the competencies needed for teachers in the area of early childhood education (K-3).
3. To develop procedures that will be used to implement the designed project.
4. To develop evaluative criteria relevant to the stated competencies.
5. To obtain involvement from the community in the preparation of teachers.

C. Personnel Involved

The staff of the early-childhood competency-based program includes the Dean of Education, the Coordinator of Competency-Based Teacher Education, two associate professors of early childhood education, two graduate assistants, other selected faculty members from the School of Education, and supervisors, principals, and teachers from

the public school system.

D. Budget

In 1973, there was a $10,000 planning grant from the Louisiana State Department of Education, followed by a $20,000 implementation grant from the same body. Currently, the program has only funds provided by the University and has not received any outside funding. The University is providing $6,740 of its funds to pay cooperating teachers this current year.

E. Contribution to the Improvement of Teacher Education

1. Students are permitted earlier entrance to student teaching (as a junior) and may complete the program in less time.
2. Students are involved with an in-depth study of the classroom, pupils, and learning leading to improvement in education.
3. Evaluative techniques are more complete and varied.
4. Program serves as a model for other levels and other courses.
5. Provision is made for a step-by-step look at the educational program and the methods of teaching.
6. Methods courses and classroom realities are evaluated daily as students meet with the involved personnel.
7. Greater teaming among faculty and/or among public school personnel is developed in a project such as this.
8. An alternative program of teacher education is provided.
9. Members of the community are involved in the teacher education program.

F. Evaluation Methods and Results

Guidelines have been established for writing objectives and competencies. Fifty-six competencies have been delineated.

Expert evaluation by consultants from the Research and Development Center in Austin, Texas, and from Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky, was utilized. Among the evaluative instruments used are pretests and post-tests. Teaching associates are observed by supervising teachers, principals, and university teachers. Self-evaluation sheets are completed by the students, and interviews and regular team meetings are conducted.

Questionnaires, checklists, logs, and interviews are part of the program. Oral and written reports are necessary. Microteaching and classroom pupil progress devices have been implemented. Seminars with the students and attitude scales reveal progress and emotions of the teaching associates. Conclusions are as follows:

1. The CBTE approach to developing teacher competencies has been very successful and should be continued.
2. Prospective teachers need more experience in actual situations working with children which this field-oriented program provides.
3. Alterations can be made in the project based upon evaluations.
4. Graduates of this project have been chosen in preference to graduates of other programs by employing agencies.